

PATENT CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A rigid pipe of variable length (1), comprising a first elongated, flexible articulated pipe-half joined to an opposing second elongated, flexible articulated pipe-half, said elongated pipe-halves being individually wound on spools (5) in a housing (12) and are progressively connected to each other to form a pipe (1) of desired length, characterized in that each elongated, flexible articulated pipe-half is formed as a chain of rigid, semi-cylindrical pipe sections (2) joined together in series at their opposing ends by hinges (3), and further characterized in that each rigid pipe section (2) from the first elongated pipe-half comprises a locking means (4) that is complimentary to a locking means (4) on the opposing rigid pipe section (2) from the second elongated pipe-half, such that the complimentary locking means lock the flexible pipe-halves together with their concave side directed towards each other forming an elongated rigid pipe of desired length.
2. (original) A rigid pipe according to claim 1, characterized in that each rigid pipe section (2) comprises internal cross-walls (10) and/or longitudinal ribs (11) for increasing the rigidity of the pipe.
3. (currently amended) A rigid pipe according to claim 2, characterized in that the rigid pipe sections (2) are brought into opposing alignment with each other by the help of a guide member (6), and that each rigid pipe section (2) has a groove (9) on its convex outer surface that engages a portion of guide member (6) to prevent rotation of the pipe sections.
4. (original) A rigid pipe according to claim 3, characterized in that the rigid pipe sections are brought progressively together by the help of a drive unit (7) that actively drives the rigid pipe sections out of housing (12).

5. (original) A rigid pipe according to claim 4, characterized in that the convex outer surface of the rigid pipe sections (2) comprises threads (6) that engage corresponding threads of drive unit (7).
6. (original) A rigid pipe according to claim 4, characterized in that the convex outer surface of the rigid pipe sections (2) comprises teeth that engage corresponding teeth of drive unit (7).
7. (original) A rigid pipe according to claim 4, characterized in that the convex outer surface of the rigid pipe sections (2) is smooth, and engages corresponding smooth rollers of drive unit (7) by friction.
8. (currently amended) A method for ~~forming~~ forming a rigid pipe (1) of variable length from two elongated, ~~flexible articulated pipe-halves halves~~, characterized by comprising the steps of:
 - forming each of the two elongated, ~~flexible articulated~~ pipe-halves by connecting a plurality of rigid, semi-cylindrical pipe sections (2) together in a chain by hinged connections (3) between opposing ends of the rigid sections (2);
 - arranging each chain of rigid pipe sections (2) on a separate spool (5) in a housing (12) of a connection device, the connection device further comprising a guide member (6) and a drive unit (7);
 - bringing the elongated pipe-halves together in a progressive manner such that the concave sides of each pipe section is ~~successively~~ successively arranged facing the concave side of an opposing pipe section;
 - equipping each rigid pipe section (2) with a locking means (4) that is complimentary to a locking means(4) on its opposing pipe section;
 - Pressing the opposing pipe sections together such that they lock together; and
 - Continuously feeding pipe sections from the connection device until a rigid pipe of desired length is obtained.

9. (currently amended) The method according to claim 8, characterized in that the outer convex surface of the rigid pipe sections (2) is smooth, and engages a plurality of smooth rollers of drive unit 7 by friction.
10. (currently amended) The method according to claim 8, characterized in that the outer convex surface of the rigid pipe sections (2) has threads (6) or teeth that engages corresponding threads or teeth on a plurality of rollers of drive unit (7).